

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CG-00 DOTE-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-24 INR-11 JUSE-00

L-03 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SCA-01 FMC-04 COA-02 DLOS-07

SWF-02 PM-07 H-03 NSC-07 PA-04 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

AID-20 CEQ-02 EPA-04 IO-14 NSF-04 SCI-06 FEAE-00

DRC-01 SCS-03 /171 W

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O 021417Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4247

INFO AMEMBASSY MANAMA IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL BOMBAY IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL MADRAS IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC IMMEDIATE

CNO IMMEDIATE

COMIDEASTFOR IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 13150

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CGEN (US VESSEL TRANS HURON), PLOS

SUBJECT: TRANS HURON TANKER

NEA FOR AMBASSADOR MOYNIHAN

1. I AM INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE EFFECT ON THE US
REPUTATION HERE OF THE OIL SPILL WHICH IS NOW TAKING PLACE
IN INDIAN WATERS AS THE RESULT OF THE RUNNING AGROUND OF THE
TANKER TRANS HURON. THE CHARTER/OWNER SHIP HISTORY OF THE TANKER
IS COMPLET BUT THE KEY POINT IS THAT THE VESSEL IS PRESENTLY
UNDER CHARTER TO THE U.S. NAVY. THE INDIAN NAVY TELLS US THAT
THE VESSEL IS STILL LEAKING AND THAT A THREE BY SEVEN MILE
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HEAVY OIL SLICK IS MOVING TOWARD THE KERALA COAST (150 MILES AWAY)

WHERE FISHING IS A MAJOR INDUSTRY AND TOURISM IS OF GROWING IMPORTANCE.

2. WE HAVE A POTENTIALLY SERIOUS POLITICAL PROBLEM HERE: TERRITORIAL WATERS ENDANGERING AN IMPORTANT INDIAN INDUSTRY. THROUGH GOOD FORTUNE, THIS STORY HAS RECEIVED ONLY SLIGHT ATTENTION IN THE PRESS SO FAR AND THE US NAVY ASPECT HAS GONE UNNOTICED BUT OUR TIME IS CLEARLY RUNNING OUT. WIRE SERVICE REPORTS (UNI AND PTI) OCT 1 FROM COCHIN MADE ONLY THE MOTHERLAND AND NATIONAL HERALD ON OCT 2. THE STORY REPORTS THAT THE OFFICERS AND CREW OF AN "AMERICAN OIL TANKER" WHICH RAN AGROUND ON THE REEFS OFF KILTAN SEPT 26 HAD BEEN RESCUED BY THE INDIAN NAVY; THAT THE REAR ADMIRAL COMMANDING IN COCHIN HAD GONE ON BOARD THE RESCUING TUG TO INQUIRE ABOUT THE WELFARE OF THE CREW "WHO REMAINED CHEERFUL" AND THAT THE SHIP HAD BEEN TRANSHIPPING OIL FROM THE PERSIAN GULF TO THE PHILIPPINES (WE HADN'T KNOWN THE DESTINATION OF THE SHIP TILL WE READ MOTHERLAND). PTI ADDS THAT THE SHIP IS LEAKING OIL BUT DOESN'T DESCRIBE THE EXTENT OF THE LEAK. SINCE THE INFORMATION CLEARLY CAME THROUGH THE INDIAN NAVY, IT LOOKS TO US AS THOUGH THE INDIANS MAY BE TRYING TO KEEP THE OIL SLICK PROBLEM UNDER WRAPS FOR THE TIME BEING, POSSIBLY HOPING FOR SOME READING FROM US.

3. CONSEQUENTLY, WE HOPE THAT WE MAY HAVE AT LEAST AN INTERIM REPLY TO THE REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE FROM THE "OWNER" OF THE TRANS HURON WHICH WE RECEIVED FROM THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND WHICH THE INDIAN NAVY HAS ALSO ASKED OUR NAVAL ATTACH ABOUT. WHATEVER ANSWERS MAY BE AVAILABLE TO THE QUESTIONS WE ASKED IN NEW DELHI 13066. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THESE QUESTIONS RAISE BOTH COMPLICATED LEGAL AND TECHNICAL PROBLEMS BUT HOPE THAT WE CAN BE ARMED WITH MORE INFORMATION BEFORE THIS MATTER BECOMES A PUBLIC ISSUE HERE IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.
SCHNEIDER

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Message Attributes

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